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The Yellow Triangle

The National Little Theater Tournament Plays, Vol. 3
Winner of the Second Samuel French Prize, 1925

PLAY IN ONE ACT

BY

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NOTE

The locale of this play is in *East Africa*, a most unusual, interesting and little known corner of the world. In atmosphere, people and architecture it in no way resembles the scene of "White Cargo" or any other plays or stories of *West Africa*, where conditions are entirely different, except that both East and West Africa are tropical and both sections inhabited primarily by negroes of many tribes.

Zanzibar, the scene of this play, is an ancient city situated on an island of the same name, twenty-three miles from the East African coast, on the borderland of British East Africa and what was formerly Germany's East African possession. Zanzibar's population is about a quarter of a million, made up mostly of Arabs, East Indians and Swahili negroes. In addition, there are people of almost every known race and color, and a handful of white people—officials, traders and their families. Zanzibar Island and a strip of the mainland are a British protectorate, nominally ruled by His Highness, the Sultan of Zanzibar, but actually administered by British officials.

It is a strange and mysterious land, where restrictions on conduct are few and where social and climatic conditions are such as to try the soul, the mind and the body. This play endeavors to portray an idea of life in this weird country.

In the Swahili words used in this play, the accent is always on the next to the last syllable. The *a*'s are always broad. The *i*'s are short, as in gasoline. *ai* is pronounced eye. *g* as in *get*. *J* as in *jet*.

Calasia—as *kalasher*, with *a*'s as in *cat*. *Kenge* is pronounced *Keng-gi*; *Kule*—*Koolay*; *Sahibs*—*sobs* or *sarbs*; *bass* like *buss*. *Cowasji Dinshaw*—*Kowji Dinshaw*. Muez-zin's call—*Allah hoo arkbar, arshardoo on la eelarhar*. *Nini*—*neeni*.

Henderson, the trader, can be English or American. Slight changes to better adapt the part to either will suggest themselves.

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

HENDERSON, *a trader*

HELEN, *his wife*

BARDOW, *American Consul*

ALIDINI VISERAM, *Arab ivory agent.*

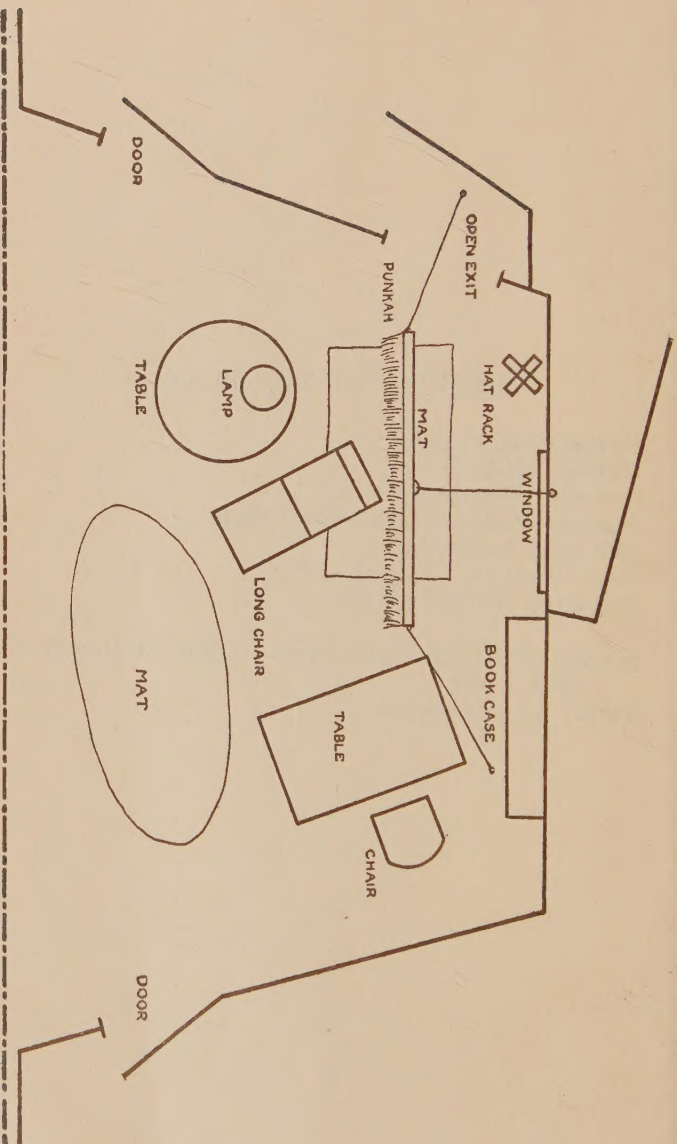
ALI, *head house-boy*

CAPT. DORAND, *Chief of Police*

MABRUKI, *Swahili servant*

SCENE: *Zanzibar, East Africa. Office in Henderson's house.*

TIME: *Late afternoon.*



THE YELLOW TRIANGLE

SCENE DESIGN

The Yellow Triangle

High-walled room with whitewashed walls and ceiling beams. Big punkah overhead. Couple of long-chairs. Tabouret. Native spears and pictures ornamenting walls. Table with small heavily shaded lamp lower right. Beside it a long-chair with arms. Desk, left, with large lamp, books, papers and skull tobacco-holder. Desk is regulation oak affair with drawer containing bottles and glasses. In spite of furnishings, room gives bare appearance. Colored grass mats on floor.

Entrances upper right, lower right, lower left. Window rear right with vertical iron bars, no glass. Sound of native singing, chanting and tom-toms.

HELEN. (*Before curtain*) If you don't mind your ways, you're going to get into deep trouble. You're a beast.

(*Quick Curtain.*)

(HENDERSON is sitting at desk. He is a big man with mustache, yellowish complexion. In loose-fitting white duck suit open in front, with soft collar and black string tie. Rather sloppy. Wrist watch, romeo slippers. His brown sun helmet is on a nail, rear.

(HELEN, all in white, with colored silk scarf—or in white riding habit; there is time for a quick change—with small white helmet, is standing before desk.

(ALI, tall negro, is standing at upper left. Bare feet, white flowing robe and round white skull cap. Yellow Triangle on forehead, one and one-half inches high.)

(MABRUKI, naked save for loin cloth, is pulling punkah lethargically near center.)

(On the desk HENDERSON keeps as a pet a live lizard or chameleon tied with a piece of black thread.)

(The punkah is simply a light wooden frame about two feet deep and five or six wide, covered with brown or coffee-colored material, with fringe of same material at bottom. This is suspended from the ceiling, in either direction, and is operated by a rope and screw eyes.)

HENDERSON. I'm a beast, am I? I'll make you eat that statement. You've said too many things like that recently. I'm tired of it. Do you understand that? (*Rising.*) I'm sick of it! I won't have it. (*Threatens HELEN. She cowers as he approaches.*)

HELEN. (*Frightened*) Don't you touch me! Don't you touch me! I'll—I'll——

HENDERSON. (*Brutally—slowly*) Yes—what will you do? What will you do?

HELEN. (*Looking around desperately*) I'll—I'll—whip you—— (*Runs for rhinoceros-hide riding-whip on small table.*)

HENDERSON. (*Contemptuously*) You'll whip me? You poor little female! You'll whip me! Here—give me that kiboko. (*Snatches for whip. She cuts him with it.*)

HELEN. (*Hysterically*) Go away, go away, you beast!

HENDERSON. (*Standing a moment astonished*) You dared to strike me? Me! Why, you poor little——, I'll teach you your place. You'll learn that domestic arrangements are different out here in Af-

rica than they are in—(Sarcastically)—*Baltimore*. There are no divorce courts. You can't get away from me no matter what I do. And I can throw you out at any time. And you dare to strike me! I'll wring your neck for you, you little marmoset. (*Threatens her. ALI approaches stealthily, showing hatred of HENDERSON, and slyly reaches under dress for knife. Squats again.*)

HELEN. Don't you touch me—don't you—— (*He grabs for her. She cuts him with whip. He chokes her in blind rage.*)

HENDERSON. You hit me, did you? You hit me. Why, damn you, I'm your master. I'll kill you—and throw your body over the sea-wall to the sharks. (*Fierce struggle.*) You hit me! I'll show you a woman's place out here in the East. (*Casts her from him.*) After this perhaps you won't be so free with your American ideas of equal rights for women. Cry as much as you like. There's no one to hear you. (*She sinks in almost fainting condition on chair upstage. HENDERSON backs away from her with kiboko in hand. Stumbles over ALI crouching on floor. Turns on him, startled.*) Get out of here, you black vermin. Nenda! Nenda chumba yako! (*ALI cowers but does not move.*) Get out of here, I tell you. Take that yellow painted face out of my sight. You no savy? (*Threatens with kiboko.*) You savy him kiboko? You fit for die now. Go—one-time—upesi—get out—sulkabacha.

(*ALI exits in fear and rage. HENDERSON walks to desk, throwing kiboko down. Sits down calmly, hands clasped over knees.*)

HELEN. (*Hysterically—rising weakly*) And you call yourself a white man—— (*He smiles at her scornfully, then takes glass, gin bottle and bitters*

shaker, out of drawer and prepares drink.) When you brought me out to this evil country two years ago you *were* a man. But you've *changed*. You left the best of you behind Aden. Oh, I was warned and I wouldn't listen! You have muscles—you can beat me whenever you want to. But you're a weakling. (*Approaches desk.*) You've picked up every vice and every bad habit in the whole East. You're an abomination to the white men. The natives hate you. Some morning you'll be found with a knife in your heart.

HENDERSON. Humph! I'll fix things now so that if that happens you'll be blamed for it.

HELEN. You drink more than any man in this vile city—alone. You come down to breakfast drunk. You enjoy the company of those abandoned women at the American Bar, and Lena, the one-eyed Italian woman, the sweetheart of sailors and beach-combers. (*He fills calabash pipe from skull tobacco jar. Lights it.*)

HENDERSON. Let's not discuss our sweethearts. That's a dangerous subject—for you.

HELEN. (*Startled*) What do you mean?

HENDERSON. Never mind.

HELEN. Oh, God! Why did I marry you? I could have been so happy. I threw my chance away for you. But some day I'll get away from you. You can't stay out here forever. And in the meantime——

HENDERSON. Get out of here. (*She looks at him, wavering between courage and fear. He jumps up with kiboko.*) Get out of here! (*She leaves quickly L.R. He goes back to desk and relights pipe, then crosses legs and reads "The East African Standard," or other suitable paper. Muffled sound of tom-toms in distance.*)

DORAND. (*Outside—shouting*) Hodi. (*No answer.*) Hodi.

HENDERSON. Karibu. (*This is the custom in East Africa.*)

(*Enter DORAND upper right, followed by ALI, who takes hat deferentially and, when neither man is looking, scowls at HENDERSON. Exit ALI. DORAND is a tall Englishman in Colonial service uniform of white and white helmet cut low in back, red trimmings on sleeves and shoulders, sultan's monogram in gold on red field on hat.*)

DORAND. Hello, Henderson. How are you feeling? (*Sits down in long-chair and mops brow with handkerchief from sleeve.*)

HENDERSON. (*Contemptuously*) Hello, Sherlock Holmes.

DORAND. (*Surprised*) Is that supposed to be humor?

HENDERSON. No, no, that's just my little way. What can I do for you?

DORAND. You can give me a drink, first of all.

HENDERSON. Humph! I thought so. (*Calling*) Boy! (*Enter ALI U.R.*) What'll you have, Dorand?

DORAND. Oh, a little whiskey and soda, please.

HENDERSON. Scotch and soda moja, gin and biters moja. (*ALI looks covertly at HENDERSON. Exit rear right.*)

DORAND. (*Looking closely at HENDERSON*) You don't look well, Henderson. I'm afraid you don't make allowances for the climate.

HENDERSON. Well, that's my own affair, I suppose.

DORAND. Oh, yes, certainly. But you are going to discover some things about this country. I've been out here ten years and I can tell you I've had to take care of myself. It's going to *get you*. You mark my words, Henderson. It'll get you just as surely as it got young Forbes.

HENDERSON. What's the matter with Forbes?

DORAND. Haven't you heard? Poor devil blew his brains out last night.

HENDERSON. Hell! He owed me two hundred rupees.

DORAND. You're a sympathetic swine.

HENDERSON. Never mind the pet names. What did he do it for?

DORAND. Oh, no doubt Ethel, up at the Victoria bar, could tell you. So could Doctor Wilson.

(Enter ALI with drinks. DORAND looks closely at ALI'S triangle. ALI serves drinks. DORAND takes out cigarette paper of quinine, breaks the end off, drops powder on tongue, swallows with drink. Exit ALI.)

BOTH. Chin-chin. *(They drink.)*

DORAND. Bah! Rotten stuff, that quinine. Knocks out fever, though.

HENDERSON. How old was Forbes?

DORAND. About twenty-five. Yes, this is a hard country. With the germs and the sickness, the vices and the violence, this climate can get you in many ways. Why, with your helmet off at noon the sun can kill you in twenty-seven seconds. *(Jumps up and slaps himself vigorously. Steps on bug.)* Damn the bugs! The scorpions, tarantulas and centipedes that crawl into your bed at night and these crazy-looking mantises that fly through the air at you.

HENDERSON. What is this, anyhow, a lecture on—*(Pause)*—natural history?

DORAND. *(Sitting down)* No, not exactly. It's a lecture on *your history*. Here's a city of a quarter million black and brown and yellow people and seventy-eight whites. We make them look up to us, salute us and all that kind of rot. It's very necessary, or they'd wipe us out. *(Seriously)* Hender-

son, when a white man acts the way you do he lowers the standing of every other white man in the place.

HENDERSON. (*Agitated*) What do you mean? What are you getting at?

DORAND. You're a weak man, Henderson, and an evil one. At home you wouldn't dare do the things you do out here. (*He gets up.*) But your retribution is coming. Africa is going to get you unless you show her more respect.

HENDERSON. Respect? Show this filthy, moth-eaten country respect?

DORAND. There is no part of the world more entitled to it, no part of the world where sickness and death are so sudden and so terrifying. (*Lights cigarette and sits on arm of chair.*) We white men have a hard enough time as it is maintaining our position here. You spend all your time fighting over cards at the English club, where they hate you, or with those old drabs up at the American bar. I've even heard rumors of you among the native women. You're drunk most of the time. You beat the natives, which is absolutely against the law. In fact, you act in a generally disreputable manner that's hurting every white person in Zanzibar.

HENDERSON. Outside of those few things I'm a nice little fellow, eh? Well, you've got nothing on me. What are you going to do about it?

DORAND. (*Rising and approaching HENDERSON*) I'll tell you what I'm going to do about it. Unless you mend your ways, I'm going to have you sent home.

HENDERSON. (*Jumping up, enraged*) Have me sent home? You can't send me home. Why, I'm the biggest trader here, and with my influence at home——

DORAND. (*Getting angry*) Look here. I've heard that kind of talk before. This is *Africa*, and we've

got to play the game accordingly. You've had your warning.

HENDERSON. Why, you silly blighter, you can't do that. (*Just before this speech or during it BARDOW enters. HENDERSON sees BARDOW and stops.*)

DORAND. (*Taking hat*) Hello, Bardow. Are you coming over to the club later? (*Looks toward HENDERSON.*) I want to see you about something.

BARDOW. Hello. Why—why, yes. I'll run across in a few minutes.

DORAND. Right you are. Cheerio. (*Exit.*)

(*BARDOW is a slim man with mustache and regulation white suit. White sun helmet, wrist watch, white canvas shoes, handkerchief in left sleeve.*)

BARDOW. Hello, Henderson. I'm afraid I'm intruding. I came over about those clove invoices. Are they ready?

HENDERSON. I suppose you're anxious about your eight rupees graft. (*American Consul receives eight rupees per invoice on exports to U. S.*)

BARDOW. (*Mopping brow with handkerchief from sleeve*) No, I wouldn't say that. I've got to get them off on the Messageries steamer day after tomorrow because I'm leaving for home on the same ship. You seemed to be having quite a scrap with the chief. What's the row?

HENDERSON. Oh, a little private matter. He threatened to send me home if I didn't go to Sunday School every day. (*BARDOW sits down on HENDERSON'S desk.*)

BARDOW. (*Laughing*) Well, he'd have to consult the British Resident—or me—before he did that.

HENDERSON. Yeah? Well, what would you do about it?

BARDOW. Frankly, I don't know. You see, Henderson, there are two kinds of white men, civil-

ized and uncivilized, and when a white man isn't civilized he—— (*Sees the pet lizard on desk. Jumps, very much startled, and carefully prepares to kill it with a book. Speaks tensely*) Sit still, Henderson, sit still. I'll get it——

HENDERSON. (*Rising, staying him with his hand*) Calm yourself, Bardow. Be brave—but don't hurt my baby.

BARDOW. Your baby! My God, Henderson, do you know what that is? It's a kenge, a water lizard, the most poisonous reptile in Africa.

HENDERSON. I know it. It's my watch-dog. You see, it's tied with a piece of thread so people will think it's roaming around free.

BARDOW. (*Angry*) I don't understand you, Henderson.

HENDERSON. I don't want you to. I don't want anyone to understand me.

BARDOW. You're a fool. You have no right to expose people to such danger. Death, from a kenge bite, is almost immediate.

HENDERSON. Not from this kenge. Old Bolivar here——(*Makes affectionate motion toward kenge*)—— is harmless as a kitten and twice as affectionate—— since I took out his poison sack.

BARDOW. That's my idea of no pet.

HENDERSON. He's a *wonderful* pet. I notice the natives are in deadly fear of old Bolivar. (*Picks up lizard and strokes it.*)

BARDOW. Do you know why?

HENDERSON. No, and I'd like to. You're the only person in the city that knows this is a harmless animal. The natives are a cowardly lot anyway, but their fear of this lizard seems to be something deeper than that.

BARDOW. Yes, it would be. This lizard—this kenge—is the chief weapon of an unholy band ruled over by Swahili witch doctors. It has thousands of

members in this part of Africa. They all wear a yellow triangle on their foreheads. They have the people of this part of the world frightened to death. They drive out devils. They're never caught. They've caused about four thousand deaths in this district in the last ten years.

HENDERSON. Yes? But where does the kenge come in?

BARDOW. They use the poison of the kenge in different ways. And *they always paint a yellow triangle on the dead one's forehead.*

HENDERSON. (*Interested*) And you say they always wear a yellow triangle?

BARDOW. Yes—up here. (*Pointing to forehead.*)

HENDERSON. Then my boy, Ali—

BARDOW. Yes, he belongs to it. (*Looks at wrist watch.*) I guess there must be five hundred members in this city. It's getting late. I have to go across the street to the club. Dorand wants to see me.

HENDERSON. (*Shouting*) Boy! (*Then craftily*) Come back and take pot luck with us. I'd like to know what that bird Dorand says about me.

BARDOW. (*Looking at him sharply*) All right. I'll be back in a few minutes.

HENDERSON. (*Calling*) Boy! (*Enter ALI.*) Cofia. (*ALI gets BARDOW's hat. HENDERSON looks at ALI's triangle.*) Ali, njo. (*ALI approaches desk. HENDERSON points at triangle with kiboko.*) Nini hi?

ALI. Sijui, Bwana—tia zamani—watu wangu. Dasturi.

HENDERSON. What does he say? I can't follow his lingo.

BARDOW. He says he doesn't know. It's a tribal mark put on when he was born. He's lying to you. (*Exit ALI, gazing furtively at HENDERSON.*) Well,

kwaheri. See you after a bit. (*Exit BARDOW, rear.*)

(*HENDERSON walks about, takes helmet off nail, puts it on. Calls.*)

HENDERSON. (*Calling*) Helen. (*Louder*) Helen. (*HELEN comes to door.*) Tell the pishi we have a visitor for chop. (*Sententiously*) Your friend Bardow. I like to see you two together. (*Gets pipe from desk.*) It makes me laugh.

HELEN. He is nothing to me.

HENDERSON. (*Going toward door*) I know it—so far——

(*Enter ALIDINI VISERAM, bustling and carrying ivory tusk. Exit HELEN L.R. ALIDINI is elderly man with white beard and spectacles. Clad in white robe with brown or black-and-gold over-robe, scimitar at waist, white or brown turban, sandals which he kicks off at door.*)

VISERAM. (*Breathlessly*) Hodi, bwana, hodi—

HENDERSON. Karibu—now, what the devil do you want?

VISERAM. (*Speaking fast*) Oh, bwana, such pembo, such pembo; great white tusks of prime ivory with not a bean of sickness. My dhow has came this day from Dar-Es-Selaam (*pronounced Darselarm*) heavy with great tusks from a secret place. I, only, could buy it; I sell to you for nothing almost——

HENDERSON. White tusks? That's hard ivory, gendai. I don't want it.

VISERAM. (*Very oily*) No, no, Bwana. I not say English too well. It is no white; no hard. It is calasia of the most great value. You come see it, Bwana Hendi, to the Custom House in the near go-

down. It is finest calasia, seventy pounds to one tusk. You come with me now. You not be sorry. I almost give it you, my friend. Not one bean in any tusk. It is not white like this kanzu (*holds his robe*). It is white like—— (*Looks for something yellow on desk. Puts hand near the lizard. Screams with fright and backs away from it.*)

HENDERSON. What's the matter?

VISERAM. (*Badly frightened*) Oh, Bwana—see—see—on the table—a kenge! The scourge of Allah—the crawling death of night.

HENDERSON. (*Faking*) Where? Where?

VISERAM. Kule, on the table, where you work. Oh, Allah is great that his slave should be saved.

HENDERSON. (*Approaching desk carefully*) Where's this thing you're so afraid of?

VISERAM. (*Hysterically*) Oh, bwana kubwa, have care—have care!

HENDERSON. (*Jumping*) Oh, yes—I see it. I'll get it. (*Sneaks up on kenge and slaps box over it.*

NOTE: *His idea in this is to continue the illusion among the natives that the lizard is poisonous.*)

There, now it can't do any harm. How could such a thing get in my house? It must have wandered over from the Darajani Swamps. It can't get away. Why are you so afraid of it, anyway? Is Alidini Viseram a coward, afraid to die?

VISERAM. No, Bwana Hendi, I am old—I die today or tomorrow or four moons from now—— (*Shrugs his shoulders.*) Haizuru. But my son, my beautiful son, made in the likeness of the Prophet, just budding into manhood, he die from a kenge biting.

HENDERSON. Yes?

VISERAM. In my house, while he sleep, the terrible animal creep upon him through the window. (NOTE: *This is a lie*)—and my son he sleep on—always. I found him at the waking hour, his beau-

tiful eyes open but not to see; on his face the blue spots, on his arm the red swelling——

HENDERSON. (*Sententiously*) Yes, and on his forehead the yellow triangle.

VISERAM. (*Caught, much affected*) Ah, you have heard—you know. The black dogs that murdered him and the police sahibs would do nothing. They are afraid for their miserable bodies. He was my only son—a little wild, as young men should be—and he was their enemy. He whipped one of them—his rickshaw boy—a mere slave to be walked the feet under—he was my only son.

HENDERSON. Well, he was probably a thief like the rest of them and deserved all he got. Come on if you want me to look at this ivory.

VISERAM. (*Suddenly changing—taking up tusk*) Oh, yes, Bwana, it is the prime ivory of so great value. Your enemy, Bwana Stephens of the English (*or American*) company, will take the fever of grief when you have bought it. (*Exit HENDERSON and VISERAM U.R.*)

(*Enter HELEN L.R. Arranges papers on desk. Fumbles near kenge, but does not see it. Enter BARDOW U.R. Stands in doorway, then puts hat on nail or hatrack.*)

BARDOW. Helen!

HELEN. (*Turning and going to him*) Oh, Don, I'm glad you're here. I've been so unhappy. Arthur said he had asked you to dinner. (*He slips his arm around her waist and they cross to long-chair R.C.*) I'm afraid he is up to some trick. *He knows.* (*She sits in chair. He on arm.*)

BARDOW. Knows what, dear?

HELEN. That I—I care for you.

BARDOW. (*Rising*) It doesn't matter. He had to know it some time.

HELEN. (*Hesitatingly*) He doesn't know that you—love—me.

BARDOW. No? Well, I'll jolly well tell him about that when the time comes.

HELEN. Are you absolutely sure yourself?

BARDOW. (*Sitting on arm of chair*) Sure? Why, don't you think I love you, Helen? Well, listen, dear—I do love you, but I think too much of you to kiss you, and it's the thing I want more than anything in the world. (*Rises and crosses toward desk.*) It makes me crazy to think of you living with that animal, obeying his orders, enduring his drunken caresses. If I can ever take you in an honest way I'll make up to you for these years of suffering. You're mine, absolutely, but I mustn't have you yet. We've got to be patient, dearest. I must go home, in a couple of days, but I'm going to wait for you. (*Approaches her.*) I'll wait for you, my darling.

HELEN. (*Rising*) Oh, Don, take me—take me now—back to America—to Maryland—— I don't care how it looks. Let them gossip—only take me. I was a fool. I didn't know my own mind. Oh, Don, he's a beast. He beat me again this afternoon and whipped my servant, Ali.

BARDOW. The dog! And I've got to leave you here with him.

HELEN. (*As she goes toward door L.*) You'll never leave me with him, Don. If you do you will never see me again.

BARDOW. (*Frightened, following her quickly*) Helen, what do you mean?

HELEN. (*Discouraged but fiercely*) Never mind—you are not going to leave me. (*Exeunt L.*)

(*Enter ALI, U.R., very stealthily; listens at doors. Goes to desk, takes top off skull tobacco box and in full view of audience makes a kenge—*

chamelion or lizard, either fake or real—drop into the skull from the roll of cloth in which he carries it. Exit quickly L.R., stealthily, as he hears voices of HENDERSON and VISERAM. During this scene, which should not be rushed, tom-toms beat outside, chanting; soft at first, swelling, then dying out. Enter HENDERSON and VISERAM U.R.)

HENDERSON. That's the worst lot of ivory I've ever seen. Not a prime tusk in the whole shipment. It's not new ivory at all. It's that buried stuff that has lain underground for a hundred years. I don't want it. It's hard ivory—gendai. I want calasia.

VISERAM. (*Oily*) What will the bwana offer?

HENDERSON. Rupees two hundred a rass.

VISERAM. Oh, bwana, such a price! Not one-fourth its value. Offer rupees three hundred. It is worth double.

HENDERSON. (*Hanging up hat*) Two hundred—

VISERAM. Bwana, you make joke. I *could not* for such a price. This ivory is of the best—from the Congo, without a bean, of the purest grain——

HENDERSON. (*Impatiently*) Enough, enough.

VISERAM. I cannot for so low price. At rupees three hundred I am giving it you because you are my friend. (*HENDERSON sneers.*) Now, if the bwana could offer rupees two hundred fifty——

HENDERSON. Two hundred, bass.

VISERAM. (*Walking toward door*) It could not be. It is useless to talk with the bwana. (*At door*) Two hundred twenty-five?

HENDERSON. (*Firmly*) No—two hundred.

VISERAM. For all that great shipment? ‘

HENDERSON. Yes.

VISERAM. I send it to you this afternoon. Thank you, Bwana, thank you. (*Salaams.*) Salaam—kwaheri. (*Exit, pleased. Lights begin to dim.*)

HENDERSON. (*Standing, looking after him*) Humph! Primeval swine! And they say the Arab is full of guile. (*Goes over to desk. Picks up cover of skull and starts to reach in. HELEN comes to door. He sees her.*) Well?

HELEN. You coming in to dinner, Arthur?

HENDERSON. No, not yet. I just bought the finest lot of ivory I've seen in two years for almost nothing. I've got to invoice it.

HELEN. Well, hurry, won't you? We're waiting for you.

HENDERSON. (*Walking around desk*) Who? You and Bardow, I suppose. Well, you'll be happy with him.

HELEN. Why do you talk that way? If I *should* be happy with him, or anybody else, it would be because you made me. (*To window.*) Oh, look at that wonderful sunset around the corner of Cowasji Dinshaw's house. This is the most beautiful hour in the tropics, when the twilight changes day into night within a few minutes.

HENDERSON. (*Writing at desk*) Look here. I've got work to do. If you leave me alone I'll get it done. (*Pause, as she approaches door.*) I'm going out later.

HELEN. Up to see Lena, I suppose. (*Meaningly.*) Very well. (*Exit L.*)

(HENDERSON *writes for a few moments, then throws pen down. Sound of tom-toms.*)

HENDERSON. Ach! I can't work. (*Rises. Takes box off pet lizard.*) Hello, Bolivar. Did you nearly die of suffocation? (*Ruminates.*) I wonder what she meant by "very well"? (*Pause. Going toward window.*) Damn it, why can't I appreciate a good woman the way other men seem to? Yes, that is a beautiful sunset, I suppose. (*Goes to desk and picks*

up pipe.) To me it simply means another rotten day has gone to make room for another rotten night. (Reaches into skull for tobacco.) I wonder where it's all going—— (Kenge bites him.) Why, why—— what the devil—— (Slaps cover back on box after looking into it, then over at pet kenge; then dies in agony, falling to floor, dropping pipe.

(Sound of tom-toms grows louder, chanting. Clock strikes six. Muezzin calls from minaret in long, deep tones, "Allah hu achbar, Ashadu an la illaha." Silence. During this, ALI enters stealthily and paints yellow triangle on HENDERSON'S forehead. Room very dark.)

HELEN. *(Calling from outside)* Arthur, oh, Arthur. *(ALI exits quickly, frightened.)* Won't you come in? *(Pause.)* Arthur, we're waiting.

BARDOW. *(Calling off-stage)* Come on, Henderson. *(Enters.)* Where are you? *(Calling back.)* I guess he's gone out. *(Stage is dim. A dull shaft of light from inside room illumines desk and across floor. BARDOW sees HENDERSON'S foot in dim light.)* Why—— Why—— What's that?—Oh,—Henderson—— *(Goes over quickly. Lights short match and looks at dead man until match burns fingers. Then runs to table and lights small lamp. Runs to HENDERSON, places lamp beside his head, lifts head and quickly rubs HENDERSON'S forehead with handkerchief to obliterate triangle. Puts cloth from table over dead man's face. Puts small lamp on desk. Sound of tom-toms during this, softly. Then calls excitedly)* Boy! Boy! Ali, Mabruki, Boy! *(Enter MABRUKI U.R.)*

(NOTE: The lamps may be electric or kerosene. If electric, the smaller must be self-contained for

portability. There is electric light in Zanzibar city.)

MABRUKI. Ndio, bwana—nini?

BARDOW. Go across street to club—tell Captain Dorand of police come here one-time—quick. Nenda. *(Boy exits U.R. BARDOW lights large lamp on desk. Stage is well-lighted.)*

HELEN. *(In doorway)* What is it, Don? *(Sees HENDERSON. Weakly)* Oh,—what has happened? *(Goes toward HENDERSON.)* Ar—Arthur—

BARDOW. *(Leading her away)* Don't go near him now, dear—it's all right.

HELEN. *(Struggling away from him)* Let me go. I must—I must see him. What has happened? Why is his face covered?

BARDOW. *(Following her)* He's quite all right, Helen. Don't—

HELEN. I demand to know what has happened.

BARDOW. *(Holding her)* Helen, Arthur Henderson has collected his reward. He was not strong enough to match himself against this country. He would have— *(Enter DORAND U.R.)*

DORAND. Well, Bardow, what's the row? *(Sees HENDERSON.)* Humph, I see. Who did it? *(Kneels by HENDERSON.)*

BARDOW. *(Crossing nervously to table)* I think he had a stroke or acute alcoholism or something.

DORAND. *(Lifting cloth from HENDERSON's face and rubbing forehead with finger)* Acute grandmother! Did you ever know any liquor that would raise blue spots on a man's face like those? *(HELEN approaches.)* Stand back, please. *(HELEN steps back.)* Bardow, have you touched this man?

BARDOW. No—only to put the cloth over his face.

DORAND. I think you're lying, Bardow. Better be careful. *(Lifts HENDERSON's hand.)* Blood blister. I thought so. *(Goes to desk and looks it over)*

carefully, picking up pipe on the way. Jumps back on seeing kenge.) Ah! Here we have it.

BARDOW. What is it?

DORAND. See—that lizard. *(Inspecting it.)*

BARDOW. *(Nervously)* Why, why, yes, that's what did it. Good heavens, we might all have been bitten.

DORAND. Why, it's tied with a string. That's odd. But that's the thing, right enough.

HELEN. *(Inadvertently)* That was his pet. It was perfectly——

BARDOW. *(Silencing her)* Yes, he had that for over a year. He thought it was harmless, but evidently——

DORAND. Oh, did he? We'll see. Have you a small mirror? Here, this will do. *(Picks up drinking glass, wipes it on sleeve, covers hand with handkerchief and holds glass before kenge.)* Strike—that's right. Again. *(Holds glass up, peers at it.)* So Henderson was bitten by his own pet?

BARDOW. Yes. It looks that way.

DORAND. Well, I say he was not. *(Showing glass.)* Look—not a mark. *(Looks in BARDOW's face. BARDOW straightens up and looks him in eye.)* Somebody is very, very clever. *(Pause.)* Cleverer than you are, I should say. When did you see Henderson last?

BARDOW. Not ten minutes ago, right at his desk.

DORAND. *(Thinking)* Mmm, it's just barely possible. *(Puts out big lamp. Picks up small lamp.)* I'll be back after a bit. *(Crosses to L.R.)* I'm going to look about the rest of the house. *(Exit L.R., closing door after him. BARDOW crosses quickly to HELEN. Stage is absolutely dark except for tiny shaded light confined to L., where BARDOW and HELEN are standing and a dim light from sunset or moonlight shining on the skull.)*

(NOTE: DORAND goes quickly around to entrance at upper right, after arranging light outside door lower right, so he can kick it open and flood portion of stage with light. Comes on stage and stands in darkness by door through which he has just exited. Audience does not see him.)

HELEN. What—what does he mean, Don?

BARDOW. (*Vigorously and with feeling*) I don't know what he's getting at, Helen. And it doesn't matter. Henderson has died. We don't know how and we can't be hypocrites enough to mourn for him. But it means we are free; free to go back to America—together—where we can be happy in the only way possible——

(*A shot and a scream ring out on the stage back of them. The door lower right is slammed open and a bright beam of light flashes across the stage. ALI has entered U.R. in the darkness and gathered up the skull after stuffing a cloth into it, to get it away with the lizard before DORAND returns. He is writhing on the floor, across HENDERSON'S feet. DORAND, who has shot ALI, stands by the door with pistol in hand. ALI lies quiet.*)

DORAND. (*Approaching ALI*) I thought so. I thought he'd come back. Bardow, you made a big mistake when you rubbed the yellow triangle off Henderson's forehead. I suppose you wanted to shield this poor devil. (*Looks down at ALI; touches him with foot.*) It's too bad. But natives are not supposed to kill white men.

(*Tom-toms and chanting.*)

QUICK CURTAIN

PROPERTIES

Punkah (picturesque but not absolutely essential)
Small table (cloth on table, to cover Henderson's face)
Long-chair (a large cane or wooden chair, with sturdy arms)
Large flat-top desk
Chair for desk
Pen, ink, blotter, etc., for desk.
Books, papers, etc., for top of desk
Tabouret or bookcase
Spears, leopard skin, native shields, etc., for walls
Large lamp
Small lamp
Skull or other unique tobacco box
Gin bottle for Henderson's desk
Glasses for Henderson's desk
Tray of gin, Scotch and bitters bottles and two glasses
Grass or other mats on floor
Two lizards, about six inches long
White sheet for Ali to carry lizard
Pistol (thirty-two cal. suggested)
Blank cartridges for pistol
Kiboko (any unique riding whip)
Knife for Ali
Papers of quinine for Dorand (powdered sugar rolled like cigarette and carried in cigarette case)
Pipe for Henderson (preferably calabash)
Cigarettes for Dorand and Bardow
London Times or other English periodical
Tom-toms

Bell or gong to strike six o'clock

Handkerchiefs (all the white men carry them in left sleeve)

Wrist watch for Bardow

Hat rack or long nails in wall

Tusk of ivory for Viseram

Small box on desk to slap over pet lizard

Stick of orange paint for Ali

Matches for Bardow, Dorand and Henderson

Mean
9
11

